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A Warning Voice; or an
Answer to the Speech of the
Right Honourable Mr. Secretary
Fox, upon East-India Affairs

For Reading Room Only

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A
WARNING VOICE;

OR, AN

ANSWER to Mr. FOX's SPEECH.

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ARMYING VOICE;

ANSWERS TO MR. FOX'S SPEECH.

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WARNING VOICE;

OR AN

A N S W E R

TO THE

S P E E C H

O F

The Right Honourable

Mr. Secretary F O X,

U P O N

EAST-INDIA AFFAIRS,

On TUESDAY the 18th of November,
1783.

And he sheweth him all the Kingdoms of the East, and the
Glory of them: And saith unto him, all these Things will I
give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. IV.

Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen! MILTON, B. I.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.

M. DCC. LXXXIII.

WARNING VOICE

OF

ANSWER

TO THE

STEECH

OF

The Right Honourable

Mr. Secretary F. O. X.

UPON

EAST-INDIA AFFAIRS

On Tuesday the 18th of November

1788

Printed by J. DODD, at the Press of the
General Assembly, in the City of Edinburgh.

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DEDICATION.

To the PROPRIETORS of EAST-INDIA STOCK.

THE publication, which I here present to you, is founded upon the idea expressed by Mr. *T. Pitt*, in the House of Commons, on Thursday last, of a *Warning Voice*, which may resound to the remotest corners of the kingdom, and proclaim abroad the consequences of the Bill brought forward by Mr. *Fox*, for new-modeling the government of the East-Indies.

I feel, in common with every British subject, the mischiefs with which that Bill is big ; the shock it gives to public faith ; the danger to which it exposes our constitution. You, gentlemen, are doubly interested ; you are to suffer a two-fold wrong ; as individuals possessing property, and as citizens of a free country : the robbery of your estate is to be made the means of invading your liberty : you are plundered

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dered in private to be oppressed in public : in aggravation of your personal losses, you are to see them employed in the destruction of the constitution ; and with the further mortifying reflection, that the enormity of the rapine is to give stability and security to the plunderers.

The leader to this attack is a person equally extraordinary : the Member for Westminster, the representative of a great part of you in parliament ; he who a few days was since known by the name of *the Man of the People* ; whom we have so often seen mounted upon a wooden stage in the public streets, warning the populace of the danger to which the constitution was exposed by the daily accessions of Crown influence ; bidding them beware of the wily arts of ministers ; and rousing them to the preservation of their rights and liberties. And yet it is this very man, who by a hasty bill, in the season of a thin attendance, makes the profligate attempt of robbing you individually of the former, and in common with the whole nation of the latter.

You will wait the decision with temper ; but, I hope, not without every exertion, which may assist your cause, and the cause of the Public. Those among you, who are Directors, must feel yourselves critically circumstanced : your inclinations as private men, and as honest citizens can guide you but one way ; but the threats of proscription from this new
 Eastern

Eastern heptarchy may possibly drive you the other. Yet I will still hope, notwithstanding the ambiguous conduct of some, that you have not cherished in your bosom vipers who will destroy you; and that, in so chosen and select a body, there do not exist persons capable of selling their eminence among you, because precarious, for an underling situation in the new government, because they may be told it will be perpetual.

I should have addressed this to you through the medium of news-papers; but they are mostly become such corrupt tools of power, such pensioners of the Treasury, that I cannot trust them with giving a fair copy of any thing, which does not flatter their present masters. The freedom of the press is stated by *De Lolme* as the great bulwark of our liberties; the suppression of that, whether by force or corruption, is one step towards their destruction; and if we may judge from the complexion of this Bill, the other steps are not far behind it.

I am, Gentlemen,

With great respect,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant,

The AUTHOR.

Nov. 24, 1783.

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WARNING VOICE;

OR, A N

ANSWER to Mr. FOX's SPEECH.

SIR,

I HAVE listened with great attention to the Right Honourable Secretary, who opened the debate of this day. I have heard him lay down a system, and have heard him state the grounds, upon which that system is founded. He has submitted to you the debt of the East-India Company, the reports of the East-India Committees, the unconstitutional powers of the Court of Proprietors, and the misconduct of Mr. Hastings; and upon these particulars he would ground a motion, which is to transfer the government of India from the Company to certain Commissioners nominated by a majority of this House, or in plain words by his Majesty's Minister.

It would naturally be expected, that the grounds stated for so new and decisive a measure, should be just, solid, and incontrovertible; and that the system should

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result

result from them by a fair and natural deduction. Let us examine the extent of the evils; we may then judge with candour of the expediency of the remedy.

The Right Honourable Secretary has stated the *debt of the Company*, after the proper deductions, to amount to the sum of eight millions. But he has carefully avoided the mention of their property in their European and Asiatic warehouses, or that now at sea, which *alone* pays off one half of this pretended debt; a debt, which, even according to the grossest exaggeration, is still, in the words of an honourable Governor, a very trifling mortgage on a very large estate.

The information, to which the Right Honourable Secretary appeals, is derived from the *reports* of the East-India Committees. But have not those reports been charged with gross misrepresentation, with wilful omissions, with notorious prejudice and partiality? And has not an honourable gentleman engaged to prove it at the Bar of this House? Is it not notorious upon reading over the names, that the gentlemen of most respectability and character absented themselves? And have you not been informed this night, of a respectable member of that Committee; who after having attended some time, retired from the business in disgust at the manner of their proceeding?

The *Proprietors* have been represented as possessing an improper *controul* over the *Directors*, inasmuch as they were able to supercede their order for the recal of Mr. Hastings.—If this controul is inordinate, it will be easy to temperate it: but let the means be gentle and rational. Let us not madly
drive

drive the disorder from the extremities into the vitals : let us not, for the sake of curing a limb, be the destruction of the whole frame.

The Right Honourable Secretary has proceeded to exhibit many heavy *charges against Mr. Hastings*; but a reply is unnecessary, till they become better substantiated. An Honourable Governor has engaged to disprove them by bringing evidence to the Bar; and surely such evidence will be more satisfactory than the Right Honourable Secretary's random assertions, or than the partial and malignant inferences drawn from those reports, which have sanctioned by an *ex parte* evidence a libel on your absent officers.

Upon grounds, thus supported, does the Right Honourable Secretary propose to abrogate the Charter of the East-India Company, in open violation of public faith; and to take the government into his own hands for the term of five years, by nominating seven Commissioners, and eight Assistant-Commissioners, and through them the innumerable subordinate officers * of that department.

The Right Honourable Secretary has pointed with the most animated eloquence the boundless extent of East-India patronage; to which, were it to be used in influence over this House, the influence of the Crown in its most enormous and alarming state, he tells us, is nothing. He has said, that it has already swallowed up the Court of Proprietors, a much larger body of men than we are, and has warned us most earnestly of the danger of its extending itself to this House. To guard against this danger he would have

* The establishments of India amount to £ 2,000,000 and the offices are upwards of five hundred in number.

us wrest this patronage from the hands of the present possessors, and place it——IN THE HANDS OF THE MINISTER!!!

The influence of the Crown has been voted dangerous by this House: and the Right Honourable Secretary tells us, that the boundless patronage of the East is infinitely more so. Will then the admirable logic of that gentleman pretend to prove to us, that our only safety lies in their conjunction? We are in danger of being swallowed up by East-India Governors: shall we fly from them into the jaws of ministers? We run the risk of being devoured by foreign plunderers: is there no alternative, but serving ourselves up as a mess to the gluttonous appetites of domestic robbers? All the instances, all the pictures, which the Right Honourable Secretary has drawn, of the dangerous influence of Governors-General over the Proprietors, and over members of this House, ought to stare him in the face, when he makes such a proposal!

To what purpose will it be, that we have projected so many reforms, and completed some, if this sudden torrent is to lay waste the harvest of our labours? We have expelled Contractors, disfranchised Revenue Officers, and regulated a Civil List, only half in value to the patronage here proposed: measures perfectly nugatory, if at the same moment that we send a few influenced men out at one door, we let in this mob of East-India placemen at another.

We have heard talk of the influence of Sir Robert Walpole, and we have ourselves talked of the influence of the noble Lord in the blue ribband. But even in the zenith of their influence, it will have nothing compared to what will be
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be that of the Right Honourable Secretary. I can already imagine him exercising the privilege to which his boldness aspires, of nominating the persons through whom he is to govern India. It is possible, indeed, that he may nominate to these situations men of strict and unimpeachable integrity, men incapable of bias from the possession of place and power: but it is also possible that he may nominate another description of persons; persons, to whom neither youth brings modesty, nor age wisdom; a strange medley of unfledged gamesters and grey-headed spendthrifts. Through them he will direct his appointments; through them he will issue his mandates; in one word, Sir, he will be King of India! This will be the smallest grievance: when possessed of a patronage, capable of such influence in this House, it will be impossible that he should remain on the common level of a subject. And though another may continue to wear the crown, to hold the sceptre, to keep his state, and repeat the speech that is made for him, yet the Minister will have a sovereignty of his own, *imperium in imperio*, independent of this titular monarch, independent of the people, and dependent solely upon the corrupt votes of his parliamentary tributaries. It is true that he has consented to leave the nomination to vacancies in one board to the Crown, and in another to the East-India Proprietors. But to future contingencies of this kind he may well be indifferent; the first nominations will answer his ends, and having secured them, it is truly generous of him to make the Crown his heirs in one case, and the Proprietors in the other. And as for removal, you will observe, that it can only happen by address of that Parliament whom he proposes as the instruments of his ambition.

The Right Hon. Secretary has said, that he does not stir this matter : the matter stirs itself. Let me ask him, Sir, does corruption stir itself? does breach of faith stir itself? does despotism stir itself? (for they are all contained in this Bill) No, Sir, it requires an active and a powerful hand thus to stir them, and the work carries with it a plain object. By means of them, Sir, he may rivet those fetters which he has already cast around the Throne; by means of them he may root himself in that situation, which public distrust might render precarious : a situation in which, when thus established, there is not the power that can remove him : he may ever after laugh at public censure, and bid defiance to royal disapprobation.

But it may be said, Sir, that if he carries this question, it will be clear that the voice of his country, through the medium of their representatives, is with him. By no means ! He may carry this question by the anticipation of that influence, which the bill is to establish. He may say to one set of men, † should this Bill pass, you shall be the Commissioners ; to another set of men you shall be the Assistant-Commissioners ; to a third set you shall nominate to the great offices in India ; and to a fourth set, (the most overcoming language of all) you, gentlemen, have young families, have nephews, have cousins, who must be provided for : they shall supercede in their employments the sons and cousins of that company of stockholders, whose rights we are invading, whose charter we are abolishing. I say, that by such means he *may* prevail, but I cannot induce myself to think he *will*. I see too much virtue still in this

† This mode of canvassing for votes for this bill has, as I have since understood, been actually practiced.

House, too many persons who have not yet abandoned the engagement they stood under to the Public, to think such a measure probable. I can imagine that man answering, "I love situations of power and emolument, but I love my country more." I can hear that man reply, "Right Honourable Sir, my children and my connections are dear to me, but the chartered rights of the land are far dearer." I can see them all spurning at the tempter's offer of riches and power and great glory, when inconsistent with the safety of their rights and liberties.

In offers and temptations like these perhaps the recess has been taken up; and it was certainly a reason of policy for postponing the measure till after the recess, that the Right Honourable Secretary might have leisure for these arrangements. Whether he has been successful or no, I cannot pretend to say; but it is plain that he does not chuse to rest his hopes on these grounds alone, since he has called in the assistance of a further stratagem, notorious for being practised by weak and desperate ministers, but always reprobated as neither decent, nor parliamentary. This motion, indisputably the most important that has been proposed during his Majesty's reign, is brought on at a time, when Parliament is known to be thinly attended, and is to be hurried to the second reading in the space of nine days, before which time it is barely possible for gentlemen to come to town, and it is certainly impossible for them to give this bill a decent review, and consideration. Accordingly, some may vote for it inconsiderately, without looking forward to the consequences. Some, I mean, who, having usually supported his Majesty's government, may support them on this occasion, as if it were a mere government question. When the bill is passed, and irrevocable, perhaps such gentlemen may then open their eyes—may
be

be awakened by the pressure of those consequences, which inevitably follow from it; the shock of public faith, and fall of public liberty. They may then amuse themselves with moving "that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished;" but the Right Honourable Secretary will walk into the lobby followed by his Asiatic pensioners, secure in his power, and in perfect derision of their nugatory motions.

But though it will be the influence of the Crown, while the Right Honourable Secretary continues in office, yet as his original nominees are by their express constitution to continue for five years, it follows, that if he should relinquish his situation before the expiration of that term, that such nominees, instead of remaining a strength to government, will commence members of his faction. They will be his body-guards, his janisaries, whom he will carry with him to garrison that *fortress*, which, I presume, he will again erect to harraß the country, when he has ceased to oppress it.

Yet for the success of this new government he does not pretend to answer. He states the whole as an experiment; he would have us rob men of what we have already sold them, as an experiment! he would have us trust him with a power unknown to the constitution, as an experiment. He would have us commit to his mercy our most sacred right and liberties, as an experiment! an experiment too, which in all human probability will fail of what it holds out to us. It places the efficient government of a country at 6000 miles distance from the country itself: it implies, as he himself states, the frequent necessity of disobedience of orders, a charge which he has previously brought with so much decency

gency against Mr. Hastings. And by admitting the necessity, leaves such disobedience always in the power of those, who are able to invent good reasons, that is, to give a false colouring to their circumstances and situation. We do not attempt to govern Ireland, separated only by a narrow channel; and it has been seen that we could not govern America at the distance of less than 3000 miles; shall we then attempt to govern India at above twice that distance?

In a word, Sir, the conduct of the Right Honourable Secretary seems to be this. He grounds measures that are dangerous upon premises that are false: he sets out, like modern warriors, with publishing an infamous manifesto, and proceeds to trample over charters to a direct assault upon the constitution: and this to effect what purpose? The purpose of establishing a weak government here, in lieu of a firm one abroad: and of setting up the counsels of men, who are raw, and perhaps insufficient, against the deliberative wisdom of an experienced Company, who have hitherto governed that part of the world with firmness at least, and certainly with little bad effect to the British constitution.

When I say that this bill assaults the constitution, I use a temperate expression. I should not exceed my own opinion, if I said that the constitution would be overthrown by it. I will appeal to your breast, Sir, you are more than commonly interested in this question, and it would be disgraceful to observe that impartiality at present, which is so becoming your situation on other occasions. On this depends whether you are to preside over a body of virtuous representatives, virtuous in the majority at least, or over a Mock Parliament, the creatures of that Right Honourable Mover, that candidate for Eastern empire.

pire. Had not you rather, Sir, (for I am sure I had) see the Right Honourable Secretary enter the House with an armed band, and bid them, "*take away that bawble,*" * than enter with his mercenary host of Asiatic pensioners, to dictate to us what we shall think, and what we shall enact: thus leaving us the parade of liberty, at the time that his word is to constitute the legislature. The man, who declares open hostilities, is a fair character, compared to him who carries on a smothered war against our liberties; which we are in that case doomed to see destroyed, though tied up from avenging ourselves upon the destroyer.

I am not without my feelings for the Company; for I think that we are acting the part of tyrants, not of protectors. We are robbing bees of their honey, the produce of their summer's industry, and offer them instead a poor mixture of our own, to support them during the winter. But sympathy for the Company is but a trifling part of what ought to engage the hearts of Englishmen. Our foreign possessions have always been reckoned dangerous to liberty; by circumstances peculiarly fortunate India has not yet been so: it is the business of Englishmen to guard against the possibility.

Let me then conjure this House not to adopt this "*palliative,*" not to adopt this "*emollient,*" this "*compromise,*" this "*half-measure,*" as the Right Honourable Secretary so candidly, so decently stiles it. Let us remember that no individual, that no chartered company hold their property under a tenure more sacred than that, which by repeated acts, and

* The words of Oliver Cromwell, when he ordered his soldiers to take away the mace, and turn the members out of the House of Commons.

by repeated charters has been secured to this Company. To the insidious temper, who shews us the glory of the East, that we may worship him, let us severally reply "get thee behind me:" let us shew him that we are not yet become corrupt, and abominable; but that there still remain those, who, amidst all trials, preserve inviolate their religious regard for the constitution.

by repeated charges has been reduced to this Copy
I am. To the Librarian's request, who shows us the
glory of the Hall, that we may worship him, let us
testify reply "Get thee behind me;" let us show
him that we are not yet become corrupt, and about
us; but that there still remain those, who, amidst
all trials, preserve inviolate their religious regard for
the constitution.

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